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B5 THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT AND THE LEDGER-STAR SUNDAY, APRIL 7, 1991 SM

VIRGINIA NEWS

State seeks Navy's buried toxic greas

Associated Press

WILLIAMSBURG — State officials are searching a state-owned fuel farm for Cosmoline, a jellylike preservative buried at the site by the federal government, after a bulldozer sank in Cosmoline-laden soil. Until the Cosmoline is removed, the state will not be able to sell the property. And Cosmoline is only one of many chemicals — some of them thought to be highly toxic — that may be buried on the site, the Richmond Times-Dispatch reported in today's editions.

Problems at the fuel farm were first reported by the newspaper in September. State officials have been told that the substance, a thick grease that resembles petroleum jelly, once filled a concrete pool 26 feet deep and as big as a football field. The Navy buried the material at various locations on the 460-acre site when it was owned by the federal government. No one knows where it was buried, except for one site: a dike into which a bulldozer sank almost completely during a lunch break. The

machine had to be pulled out by a winch. The scope of the Cosmoline mess is just one discovery the Wilder administration has made about the Virginia Emergency Fuel Storage Facility in York County since embarking on a full-scale cleanup in late November. The administration has found that much of the contamination at the site stems from wholesale dumping by the Navy, shoddy construction and a failure to use most of the facility for its intended purpose, state records show.

The disclosures, which were discussed during a General Assembly hearing last week, help provide a basis for Virginia's claim that the federal government owes \$8 million for the \$16 million cleanup. The Cosmoline must be removed if the state is ever to sell the property, said O. Randolph Rollins, state deputy secretary of public safety. "It would have an impact on the value of the property," Rollins said last week. The Navy built the fuel farm and operated it from 1943 to 1969 as part of the Naval Supply Center at

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